

Plain Talk Principle ~ Words

The Great “Affect-Effect” Conundrum

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If our written materials are any indication, the words “affect” and “effect” cause us more trouble than any others. They certainly gave me a lot of trouble at first, and I still find the correct usage hard to explain to others. So I culled these examples of correct and incorrect usage from real-life written communications to and from Ecology staff. Maybe this will help.

First, the examples of correct use:

- Many pesticides are known to affect the central nervous system and children are more likely to suffer these effects than adults are.
- Landfills required to close by 1989 did not have sufficient time to accrue the necessary level of funds to effect closure.
- The Silent Threat that Affects All of Our Lives
- The type of commercial establishment also significantly affects the rate of litter accumulation on nearby minor residential streets.
- The next meeting should include Ecology’s TCP staff for input on how the consent order/decreed under which the landfill operates will affect the proposal.
- As you are well aware, the outcomes of the legislative session affect the Department of Ecology in many ways.
- The ECC has had a real positive effect on Ecology activities and the environment through their work on used oil, the Increased Generator Contact Project, and the DW regulation amendment process.
- A number of suggestions were made that should affect final construction design of the facility.
- Include information such as the nature of any recent damage to the anchors, chain or windlass and any repairs effected.
- Construction work that affects area creeks and wetlands can begin only if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approves a wetland-mitigation and water-quality protection plan.
- This study is similar to one conducted about two years ago that examined exports and their effect on Washington's economy.
- Construction would temporarily affect 59 acres of wetland, many of which are farmland, and permanently remove trees and shrubs from three-and-a-half acres of wetland habitat.

Now, some examples of incorrect use:

- I plan to develop a display relating how a landfill could potentially effect a watershed. (AFFECT)
- Staff coordinate the interpretation of these rule changes to determine how to implement the changes and how they effect the solid waste system. (AFFECT)
- The Program held a stakeholder workshop to solicit input from major interest groups effected by the law. (AFFECTED)
- The speaker talked about domestic violence and its affects on society and the workplace. (EFFECTS)
- The login and password have been in affect since June this year. (EFFECT)
- Issues and concerns raised with respect to quality of information submitted for site-specific risk assessment included consideration of affects of chemicals beyond cancer and birth defects. (EFFECTS)
- This would cover most of the Eastern and Central Regions without effecting West side landfills. (AFFECTING)
- These flawed (overly positive) conceptual models effect risk assessment calculations, allowable leakage calculations, and time to impact the groundwater and Columbia River calculations. (AFFECT)
- You will receive a letter to that affect a week or so before the 180th day. (EFFECT)
- SW&FAP staff will coordinate the interpretation of these rule changes with local jurisdictional authorities and facility operators, and with other Ecology programs, to determine how to implement changes and how they effect the solid waste system. (AFFECT).
- They are still in court with the City of Everett over issues relating to their interlocal, but they don't expect the outcome of those lawsuits to effect the schedule of their plan. (AFFECT).
- This effects the public folders service of e-mail only. (AFFECTS)
- This Message Effects All Ecology Employees (AFFECTS)
- Tacoma Steam Plant operators are unhappy with my recommendation as it will adversely effect their balance sheet and because they may have released ash for other use constituting disposal such as for fill. (AFFECT)
- The righthand lane on both sides of I-5 are the primary effected lanes. (AFFECTED)
- Miscellaneous Time is time away for any of these five reasons and will count as paid time, but will not effect your leave balances. (AFFECT)
- The following web sites will be effected: (AFFECTED)

- **And examples of correct and incorrect use, within the same paragraph and even the same sentence!:**
- The people and organizations you do business with will be affected, and some may even go out of business. (CORRECT)....Because the computer chip has become such an integral part of our lives, the whole world will be effected. (AFFECTED)
- It is probable that TPA milestones will be effected (AFFECTED) in FY 99, or work will be stopped that will have an effect (CORRECT) on future TPA milestones.